NUMB. CIX.

The Prompter.

Such ſhameful, and ſuch monſtrous Things, as THESE,
With Dances, Tricks, Italian *Songs, and Rhime,*
May keep up Sinking Nonſenſe, for a Time:
But, That *will* FAIL, *which* now, *ſo much* o'er-rules;
And SENSE, *no longer, ſhall ſubmit to* Fools.

Eſſay on Poetry.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 25. 1735.

I Have in my View to compoſe, for Entertainment of my Readers, a ſhort, but neceſſary, Treatiſe, intitled, *The Art of* CLAPPING *and* HISSING, *inſtructively:* --- For, I find, that All my Labours, in Purſuit of Theatrical Improvements, are in Danger to be *Loſt*; unleſs the AUDIENCES will aſſume, into their own, beſt-qualified, Hands, the Adminiſtration of *Diſtributive Juſtice*: --- An obſtinate *Vanity* in the PLAYERS (allowing for particular *Exceptions,*) concurring with an Indolence, or Inattention in the MANAGERS, to deprive Men of Senſe of every reaſonable *Hope*, from a Change, in their Schemes of proceeding.

THE Patentee, who, by Virtue of a *Grant*, from His preſent Majeſty, is at the Head of a Company, emphatically call'd *The* KING's, is a Gentleman, of Character, and Fortune; of Great Good Nature, and Good Purpoſe, and a bold, and liberal, Adventurer, upon EXPENCE, much more than ſufficient to raiſe the Stage, to a *Grandeur*, and *Juſtneſs*; which, yet, there ſeems to be no Proſpect of, in his Recompence. --- It is plain, then, He muſt be ILL-ADVIS'D: The Pleaſures, He has *Taſte for*, (and, indeed, a *Right* to the Enjoyment of) are inconſiſtent with that APPLICATION, which is, unavoidably, the *Firſt Eſſential*, and, without the conſtant Help whereof, The very *Beſt-weigh'd* Schemes of Management muſt end in Diſappointment. ---- What, then, can be expected, if Both the *Application*, and the *Scheming*, are, ALIKE, *Defective?*

IT is with *Pain*, as well as *Tenderneſs*, I find my ſelf compell'd to touch the Errors of a Gentleman's Conduct, whoſe very *Negligence*, in governing the Province he has undertaken, ſerves to *prove* the Generoſity of his *diſ-intereſted* MOTIVE: For, what can be a clearer Evidence, that His DESIGN was, to ſupport the *Stage*, at *Hazard* of his private *Fortune*, than, that He PAYS, *more liberally*, and takes *leſs Care*, to bring his *Money back again*, than Any Maſter of a Theatre, who fill'd his Poſt, before him.

FOR this Reaſon, I look'd on, with leſs *Concern*, while His *Purſe* alone, was ſuffering --- But, I am moved, with warmer Apprehenſion, when I perceive His *Prudence*, call'd in Queſtion. ---HE, whom The *Royal Family* diſtinguiſhes, by a ſtrong Partiality of *Favour*; HE, whom, his Friends have heard, I expreſſing, upon all Occaſions, the moſt grateful *Senſe* of This remarkable Attachment, This, ſo gracious, and acknowledg'd Condeſcenſion, HE, ſure, can never, WILLINGLY, indulge his Enemies the *Opportunity*, of miſ-repreſenting him, in his *political Principles*, as an Introducer of *Diſloyal*, Doctrines, by Reviving a *King-killing Play*, which teaches a Repenting Miſtreſs the MURDER, of her ROYAL Lover, *in Return for an Affection*, which ſhe had long, and amorouſly, *encourag'd.*

IF, therefore, it ſhou'd prove a *Truth*, (as I can hardly think it will,) and, The MAID'S TRAGEDY receives his Licence, to be acted, at That Theatre, at leaſt, I will not judge it poſſible to have been the CHOICE of this more cautious MANAGER. --- And, I hope, the Time will come, when ſtronger Reaſons will be *exacted*, for Revival of a Play, by which the publick Taſte may be *corrupted*, than, that It has a *Scene, or two*, wherein OLD PLAYERS have been *ſaid to ſhine*: and MODERN ONES *expect to do ſo.*

THE Maſter of a *Theatre* is a Kind of General TRUSTEE, for the Nation. --- He holds, *in Ward*, the MORALS of a riſing Race of People. --- Their Manners, Prejudices, Gallantries, Deportments, Wit, and Breeding, muſt take deep Impreſſions from His *Conduct*. --- And, inſtead of leaving at Election of unqualified Judges, *What* PLAYS *ſhou'd be brought on*, It ought to be *His own*, MOST STUDIED, *Care:* as being a Determination, from whoſe *Conſequence*, the Theatre becomes the Great REFINER, or DEPRAVER, of a Hundred Thouſand Families.

SHALL, then, thoſe prudent *Fathers*, who wou'd guard, with Tenderneſs, their Daughters Modeſty --- Thoſe *Husbands*, whoſe whole Happineſs in Life is center'd in their Wives Fidelity---The GREAT, whoſe Eminence is but a Conſequence of *Loyal Principles*--- The BEAUTIFUL, whoſe very Power of *Charming*, muſt depend upon thoſe *Soft*, and *Pure*, Ideas, which ſupport the *Sex's* HONOUR --- Shall all Theſe ſit (*inſulted*, under Shadow of receiving *Entertainment*) and behold, without Reſentment, and Impatience, the moſt manifeſt and lewdeſt, Violations, even of common *Decency?* --- the Cauſe of *Villainy, Rebellion, Impudence*, and *Cut-Throat* MURDER, *recommended*, from the STAGE; and that too perhaps, amidſt the *Horror-moving* PLAUDITS, of an *unreflecting* Auditory!

WHERE,

WHERE, *then*, is the Diſcernment of the *Learn'd*? the Gravity of the *Serious*? the Honour of the *Noble*? the Delicacy of the *Fair*? the Spirit of the *Brave*? or Indignation of the *Injur'd*? —— WHERE *is* the *Soul*, the *Genius*, the *Diſtinction*, of DEGREE, and REVERENCE? if National and Public Intereſts can be, thus contemptibly, reduced, till they give way, to *Private*, and *Pecuniary*, Indignities!

THE envenom'd *Hiſs* of All *united* AFRICA, cou'd never wound too cruelly, that Influence of *Corruption*, which invades us from the THEATRES: — *There*, — Vice advances, COVER'D: and deceives, *unfelt*, *unfought with*. — The PLEASURE, which conceals, at once, protects it, from our *Reaſon*, and endears, and recommends it, to our *Reliſh*. — We are Loſt, and Irrecoverable, before we apprehend our *Danger*: and, it is, therefore, one of the moſt publick-ſpirited Inſtances, a Man, can give, of his HUMANITY, to be *Severe*, in the Repulſe of ſuch a gay-dreſs'd, Univerſal, Enemy; by attacking, not only its *felt* Influence, but, even its *diſtant*, and moſt *veil'd*, Advances.

IF *ſuch* ſhou'd be the Watchfulneſs, of wiſe, and generous, *Audiences*, how *guarded* ought the STAGE Itſelf to be, againſt the Introduction of corrupt, and diſſolute, Performances? — But, againſt this Execrable Play of the *Maid's Tragedy* in particular, the *Critical Remarks of Mr.* RYMER, had eſtabliſh'd *a Decree* ſo unexceptionable, ſo *ratified*, by Conſent of All the Thinking Part of Mankind, for more than *Half a Century*, that any Attempt to *revive this* Tragedy, is MONSTROUS; when the *only* Argument which made it ſufferable, formerly, is now no longer of Force: nor *pleadable*, (if I dare preſume to ſay ſo) by our modern Stage Heroes. What That Argument, was, the *Critic* has inform'd us. — "THEY "*ſay*, (for Inſtance) 'tis the PLAY, that *pleaſes*: I "ſay, 'tis MR. HART, that *pleaſes*. — Moſt of the "Buſineſs falls to His Share; and, whatever HE "delivers, Every One takes, upon *Content*. — Their "EYES are prepoſſeſs'd; and charm'd, *by His* AC-"TION, before the WORDS can *approach their* "EARS: Inſomuch, that, to the moſt *wretched of* "*Characters*, HE gives a *Luſtre*, and *Brillant*, "which dazles the SIGHT; till the *Deformities* in "the *Poetry* can no longer be *perceived*."

O YES! — O YES! — O YES! — If Any Man can give a true Information, where ſuch an ACTOR, as the *Above-mark'd*, is, at preſent, to be had, He ſhall receive, as a *Reward*, the SILENCE of the PROMPTER, from That Day forward: and the ASTONISHMENT of All Good People, as a *ſurplus Gratuity*, for his Labour.

"THE *Buſineſs*, of the MAID'S TRAGEDY, (con-"tinues *Mr. Rymer*) is THIS. *Amintor*, contracted "to *Aſpatia*, by the King's Command, marries "*Evadne*, Siſter to *Melanthius*; and, preparing to "go to *Bed* to her, the Bride, *mincing nothing*, tells "him, flatly, that ſhe but took Him, *for a Cloak*, "and is a *Bed-fellow*, for none but the KING. — "This Secret, her Brother, *Melanthius*, extorting "from the Good Man, He hectors *Evadne* into "*Repentance*; and makes her promiſe — to MURDER "*the* KING: which *ſhe* EFFECTS! — *Melanthius*, "by ſeizing the *Fort*, provides for his own Security; "and *Lyſimachus*, Brother to the murder'd King, "*ſucceeds*; and PARDONS ALL! —— *Evadne* is, "now, willing to go to Bed, with her Husband; but "He refuſing, She *kills* herſelf — *Aſpatia*, in Man's "Habit, *kicks* her *Sweet-heart*, AMINTOR; duels "him, and is *kill'd*. And, then, *Amintor* kills "Himſelf, to *follow* her. — And, *Melanthius*, at-"tempting the ſame, is PREVENTED."

A Man, who intended a SATIRE, on the *Writers*, *Introducers*, and *Approvers*, of this Play, took more Pains than *Enough*, when he troubled himſelf with any *more* of it, than This Hiſtorical Abridgement of its Meaning.

COLD, INTENTIONAL, MURDER, deſerves the Correction of the GALLOWS, not of the THEATRE. —Yet, we have, *here*, not only ſuch actual *Murder*, but ſuch *Murder* of a KING! — And, by WHOM is That King ſo *murder'd*? — Why — by his Subject, and his MISTRESS, under the Softneſs, and *Confidence*, of his long-receiv'd, long-return'd, *Endearments*! — What an accumulated Profuſion, of *horrible Leſſons*? What an Ear-blaſting, *Violation* of all, that is tender, and natural, in *Woman*? What a MEANS, above all to excite Curioſity, in PRINCES? and reward, and delight them, with the USE, (ſo politically made) of *their own* ROYAL PATENT!

"A King, in *Hiſtory*, (ſays the *Critic*) *might* marry "his Concubine to Another Man, for a *Maid*; and, "then, hinder that Man from *poſſeſſing* her. — But, "He wou'd never turn them, all Night, into the "Bed-Chamber, together: Nor wou'd he come, "in the Morning, to queſtion, and torture the Soul "of the Husband, as we find in *This Tragedy*. — "Nor wou'd he impoſe it on a Man, whom he "knows, and owns, to be *Honeſt* and *Valiant*, to "ſerve as PIMP, to his own Bride: Never was "*King* (in Hiſtory) ſo errant a *Fool*, and *Madman*."

"As for *Evadne*, continues He, never did *Hell* "give Reception to ſuch a Monſter! — *See*, what "ſhe ſays, to her *Husband*!

"*A* MAIDEN-HEAD, Amintor! — *at* my Years!
"*Alas*, Amintor! *think not*, *I forbear*
"*To ſleep with thee*, *becauſe I have put on*
"*A* Virgin Strictneſs! — *Look upon theſe* Cheeks,
"*And*, *thou ſhalt find the* hot, *and riſing*, Blood
"*Unapt for ſuch a Vow* — No — *in this* Heart,
"*There dwells as much* Deſire, *and as much* Will
"To put that wiſh'd Act in Practice, *as e'er*, *yet*,
"*Was* known, *to* WOMAN! ——

"BUT, thus far, ſhe is BASHFUL; — After This, "the Scene is *wrought up*; and preſents her Im-"pudence, TRIUMPHANT! — Was there, ever, in "Hiſtory, any Precedent of a *Magdalen*, that, in a "Fit of *Repentance*, fell, from Abuſing her Husband, "to MURDERING her GALLANT, and her SOVE-"REIGN! — They *call* him (amongſt 'em) LUST-"FUL THIEF! DEVIL KING! SHAMELESS VIL-"LAIN. And, all This, only becauſe, as ſhe tells "him,

"*Thou kepſt me* Brave at Court, *and* WHOR'D *me*!"

I will ſay *no more*, of this Play, than, that the *Amazement* I am under, at Report of its being Reviv'd (*in the preſent Condition of the Theatre*) is ſo juſtly conſiderable, that I apprehend but One Thing, which can poſſibly *encreaſe* it; and That is, — Shou'd our *Women*, in Diſgrace of their *Modeſty*, condeſcend to appear at it — or our Men, in Neglect of their *Virtue*, permit it, a ſecond Time, to be *acted*.

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